DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 388 596 SO 025 560

AUTHOR	Graham, Andrea
TITLE	Nevada Folklife: A Curriculum Unit for Junior High and Middle School Students.
INSTITUTION	Nevada State Council on the Arts, Carson City.; Nevada State Dept. of Education, Carson City.
PUB DATE	91
NOTE	42p.; Funded in part by grants from the Nevada Humanities Committee and Nevada 125th Anniversary Committee.
AVAILABLE FROM	Nevada State Council on the Arts, 329 Flint St., Reno, NV 89501.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Artists; Community Resources; *Cultural Education; Curriculum Design; Elementary School Students; *Folk Culture; Handicrafts; Intermediate Grades; Junior High Schools; Junior High School Students; *Material Culture; Middle Schools; *Oral Tradition; Social Studies
IDENTIFIERS	Middle School Students; *Nevada

ABSTRACT

Folk culture is everyday culture. Since all students have a folk culture, a folklife unit is a good starting place for the study of personal, local, state, and national history, and by comparing similarities and differences, for the study of the folk traditions of others. The guide begins with an introduction to the field of folklife and the lessons it can teach. Five daily lesson plans for a unit on folklife follow: What is Folklore?; Family Folklore (two lessons); Folk Groups; and Community Folklife. Seven additional chapters go into more detail on specific forms of folk traditions. Suggested classroom activities are given for each area: (1) "Oral Traditions"; (2) "Music and Dance"; (3) "Folk Crafts and Art"; (4) "Occupational and Recreational Lore and Skills"; (5) "Material Culture"; (6) "Folk Beliefs and Medicine"; and (7) "Foodways." Folklore throughout the curriculum suggests opportunities for incorporating folklife into established subject areas. The guide concludes with suggestions for finding artists and resources in the community and bringing them into the classroom, and a list of resources, organizations, books, and films. (MM)

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NEVADA FOLKLIFE

A Curriculum Unit for Junior High and Middle School Students

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A Curriculum Unit for Junior High and Middle School Students

By Andrea Graham

Distributed by the
Nevada State Council on the Arts and
Nevada Department of Education

Funded in part by grants from the
Nevada Humanities Committee and Nevada 125th Anniversary Committee

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A Curriculum Unit for Junior High and Middle School Students

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Acknowledgements

The Nevada Folklife Curriculum Unit was developed with funding from a Nevada Humanities Committee grant and matching time and money from the Douglas County School District, the Nevada State Council on the Arts and the Nevada Department of Education. Behind each of these organizations are specific individuals who made the job easier: Judy Winzeler, Executive Director of the Humanities Committee; Thomas Covault, Assistant Superintendent for Education with the Douglas County Schools; Blanton Owen, Folk Arts Program Director with the Arts Council; and Bill Abrams, Education Consultant at the Nevada Department of Education.

This curriculum would not have been possible without the participation of working teachers in the Douglas County system, who helped organize the lessons and tried them out on their students. Howard Bennett, Tom Morgan and Susan Williams sketched out the lesson plans; Susan Williams used the lessons in her class and made them better.

Nine Nevada teachers participated in an in-service class in the fall of 1990 to use the lessons with their students and refine the unit further; their help was invaluable. Thanks to Janet Anderson, Carson City High; Judy Armstrong, E.W. Fritsch Elementary, Carson City; Christina Carter, Billinghurst Middle, Reno; Dixie Crook, Vaughn Middle , Reno; Kathleen Johnson, Towles Elementary, Reno; Derek Larson, Gomes Elementary, Reno; Ellyn MacKenzie, Vaughn Middle, Reno; Pete Simone, Washoe High, Reno; and Tom Zachry, Dayton Elementary. Thanks also to folklorists Nancy Nusz of Oregon and Dave Stanley of Utah for helpful comments and suggestions.

This publication was designed by Paul Cirac of White Sage Studios in Virginia City, and printed by the Nevada State Printing Office. Design and printing of the unit were made possible through a grant from the Nevada 125th Anniversary Committee.

Andrea Graham
Nevada State Council on the Arts
May 1991

Introduction

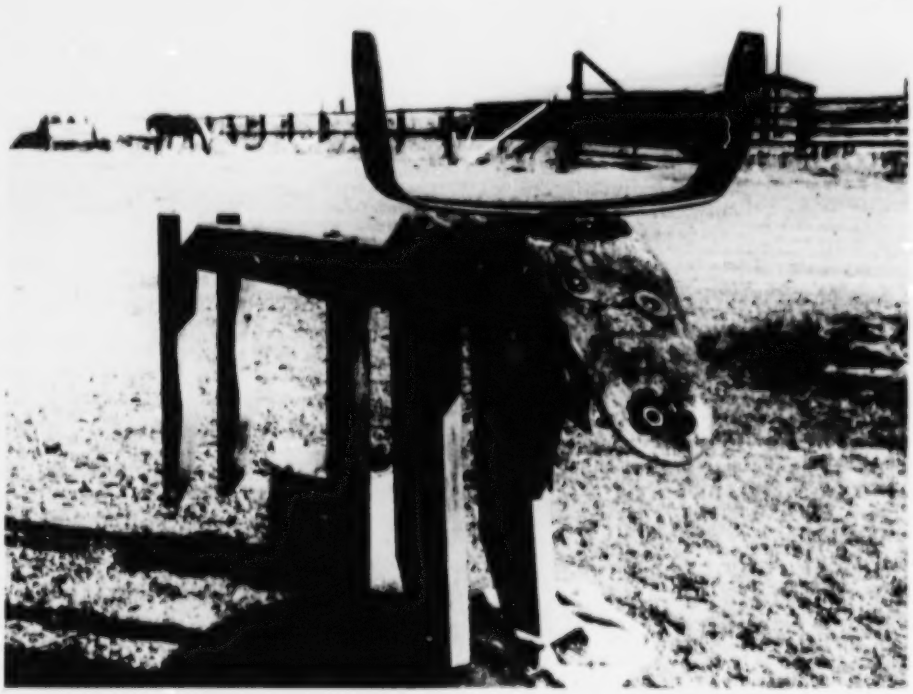
The information in this guide is intended as a starting point for introducing teachers and students to the field of folklife. Folklife is all around us, it is part of all of our lives; in fact it is so close that we usually don't see it as a subject worthy of study. Folk culture is everyday culture. But it is precisely because folklife is so integral to who we are that it is so revealing and can teach us so much about our family, our community and our nation. By extension, studying the folk traditions of another person can help us understand their view of the world, too, and help us see that people are not so different in their basic needs and feelings, just in how they express them.

Since everyone, even the youngest schoolchild, has and uses folklore, there is plenty of material for students to draw on. This makes a folklife unit a good starting place in the study of state or national history and culture, and even for the study of other countries. Folklife topics are great for writing assignments because they let students write about themselves and something they are familiar with. And traditional systems and styles of math, science, crafts, and music can be brought in to the classroom as a way of connecting students to the local culture.

This guide begins with an introduction to the field of folklife and the lessons it can teach. Five daily lesson plans for a unit on folklife, with specific activities and assignments, are next. Seven additional chapters go into more detail on specific forms of folk traditions, and suggested classroom activities are included for each of these. Teachers are busy people with lots of requirements to meet already, and a folklife unit longer than a week simply would not fit into most schedules (although a semester could easily be spent on the subject). However there are lots of opportunities to incorporate examples of folklife into established subject areas, and the purpose of the additional lessons is to give you ideas on how to do this.

While the suggestions in those lessons are mostly aimed at social studies and English courses, I have included some brief suggestions for ways folk traditions can be brought into other classes as well. The final two sections talk about finding folk artists and resources in your community, and bringing them into your school. This takes time and work, but the results of exposing students directly to tradition bearers and folk artists are worth the effort. The final section of this unit contains lists of resources—organizations, books, and films—for those interested in learning more, or looking for aids to enhance their students' study of folklife.

WHAT IS FOLKLORE?



The legislation that set up the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress in 1976 defines American folklife as "the traditional, expressive, shared culture of various groups in the United States: familial, ethnic, occupational, religious, and regional." It continues, "Expressive culture includes a wide range of creative and symbolic forms, such as custom, belief, technical skill, language, literature, art, architecture, music, play, dance, drama, ritual, pageantry, and handicraft. Generally these expressions are learned orally, by imitation, or in performance, and are maintained or perpetuated without formal instruction or institutional direction."

Definitions are very neat and concise, but it is usually easier to understand what folklife is by using specific examples (we use the terms *folklore* and *folklife* interchangeably, although *folklore* tends to imply oral traditions, and *folklife* includes the broader range of material and customary traditions such as crafts, architecture, occupational skills, and holiday celebrations).

Folklife is characterized by several traits. First, it is learned and passed on informally, usually by word of mouth or by example in face to face situations. It is not the information we gain from books or by watching TV. It is the joke we hear from a friend and pass on at the dinner table that evening; it is learning to make a paper airplane by watching and trying ourselves.

Second, folklife is traditional; that is, it has some depth in time. A story we tell about a strange experience that happened to us yesterday is not folklore, although it may well contain some elements of traditional narrative. A story about the poodle who blew up while being dried in a microwave, heard from a "friend of a friend," has been spread around the country for years by oral transmission and is an example of folk tradition.

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Third, folklife is shared within groups of people, the "folk" in folklore. The group can be a school class, a family, an occupational group such as teachers or ranchers, or an ethnic group. Folklore binds a group together, reflects its shared values and interests, and can serve to educate newcomers into the ways of the group. An individual's good luck belief or ritual is probably not folklore; a similar practice or belief subscribed to by a whole group of sixth graders is.

Fourth, folklore exists in different versions. Two people can tell the same joke, recognizable as such, but each version will be a little different. Everyone can make a paper airplane, but each will be a slight variation on a theme.

Fifth, folklore is usually anonymous in origin; no one knows who made up the first knock-knock joke, or who the first person was to make a particular kind of saddle. Traditions are added to and changed constantly, so they are really group productions as well as individual creations.

Finally, and perhaps most crucially, folklore is creative. It goes beyond the functional to include someone's idea of beauty or fun. It expresses something important about the culture that supports it. It makes life interesting. And it is central to what makes us human.

Folk, Popular and Elite Arts

A useful way to understand folklife is is to think about it in contrast to other aspects of culture. Although the boundaries are often indistinct and overlapping, human cultural life can be divided into three dimensions for the purposes of discussion—folk, popular and elite.

Elite arts are those which are taught in formal institutions, passed on in the network of "high culture," practiced by professionals in their field, and include what most people mean by "the arts." Operas, novels, symphonic music, fine art sculpture, gourmet food and large buildings designed by architects are all part of elite culture.

Popular culture is that which comes to us through the mass media: the national culture of television, popular romances, rock music, tract houses, frozen microwave dinners and craft kits are all part of popular culture. Pop culture is national culture, available everywhere at the same time and in almost exactly the same form.

In contrast, *folk* arts are informal and local or regional. Examples include southern fiddle and banjo music, local historical legends, Basque food, log houses, cowboy poetry, town celebrations, family holiday customs, handmade saddles and home remedies. Folk arts are different in different parts of the country; they tend to change little over time, but vary widely from place to place.

Of course, there is a tremendous amount of interchange among these different aspects of culture, since we are all involved in all of them. The division is not meant to rank the worth of these different kinds of culture, either. They are all important, and they all contribute to the richness of our society. For a long time, however, the folk arts have been overlooked. They have been taken for granted or accorded lesser status

What is Folklore?

because they are part of the everyday world. There seemed to be nothing "special" about them. But imagine what life would be like without the rituals of everyday life we share with our families, colleagues and friends. Think how much it means to be able to share a joke with fellow teachers, a joke probably no one else would understand. Think about the things that make your community unique—the look of farms and ranches on the land, the style of houses, the ethnic restaurants, the community celebrations, the stories about how local landmarks were named. Think about how important the skills of musicians, dancers, craftsworkers, cooks and storytellers are to your community, your church, your ethnic group, and your family. It is folklore that makes life personal and real and relevant.

The Functions of Folklore

We would not create, use and pass on folklore if it didn't serve some purpose in our lives and our communities. Many types of folklore are entertaining—music, stories, games—but often they also serve as important means of educating people, particularly young people, into the values and beliefs of their culture. As such, they also are a strong tool for maintaining group solidarity, expressing shared esthetics and attitudes, and validating cultural norms. Interestingly, folklore sometimes seems to express ideas that are contrary to a group's values; this may actually reinforce those values by going to the opposite extreme. And we can't overlook the important function of "letting off steam" and testing limits that such things as dirty jokes, song parodies, and graffiti fulfill.

The Lessons of Folklore

Aside from the ability of folklore to educate us about our local community and make us aware of the importance of tradition in our own lives, what can it tell us and our students about the larger world? Because everyone has folklore, no one is left out. Students have a wealth of examples from their own lives that can be used to understand the lives and traditions of others. Folklore is so close

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to home that problems of relevancy are nonexistent.

From an understanding of their own traditions and folk groups, students can reach out to the folk cultures of other groups in their community. Folklore is a road into other ways of life. Other people aren't weird or odd, just different; they do the same things we do, they just express them a little differently. By moving from themselves to their communities, and then to the state, the whole country, and even to other cultures around the world, students can make leaps of understanding. They can learn to appreciate diversity, even to revel in uncovering the similarities and differences between themselves and others. From this comes, we hope, tolerance of others and an openness to new and different experiences that can be carried on through life.

GOALS

1. To clear our minds of erroneous notions of what folklife is.
2. To develop an understanding that folklife is all around us, and that everyone shares folklore with others.
3. To develop an understanding of our own traditions and an appreciation of the traditions of others.
4. To develop a sense of identity in relationship to family, community, cultural groups, region, state and nation.
5. To promote creativity and self-expression within one's own traditions.

ROOTS AND WINGS

"I felt that roots and wings were the most important things we could try to give our children. Roots would be the place and the people to which they would want to return, to get love and security and pass on to their children. The wings could mean the courage to leave security and try new things, new places, new thoughts"

—Chase Lansbury, quoted by Linda Constant Buki in *Folk Arts in Education: A Resource Handbook* (East Lansing; Michigan State University Museum, 1987), p. 75.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

While this unit was prepared with junior high and middle school students in mind, the lessons are adaptable to almost any grade level. Some of the simpler activities, such as making paper airplanes, talking about names, or collecting recipes would work for elementary students, although probably not for the youngest kids. One teacher used the unit in her third grade class and they published a very nice collection of recipes gathered with the help of parents. Special Eduction students can also do some of the activities. And there is enough information in the additional lessons, and in bibliographic references, to develop interesting activities for high school students as well. Also, folklore is a subject that older students can teach to younger students, if that happens in your school. These lessons don't have to be kept in a classroom setting, either—they would make engaging activities for clubs, boy or girl scout troops, and summer camps. In or out of the classroom, a folklore unit is a good way to get a group working together, learning about each other, and ready to be open-minded about other people and places.

A number of the activities deal with family traditions or require that parents or other relatives be asked for information, such as how a child was named. For this reason, it might be a good idea to send a letter home at the start of the unit explaining the folklore lesson and asking for help and cooperation when children come home asking questions. Some families may not want to share some of the information asked for, and that's fine—cultural traditions are very personal and often private, especially those connected to religion or other belief systems. Most of the time, however, people are honored to be asked about their unique traditions, and you might mention in the letter that parents who practice a folk art form such as music, crafts or food preparation might want to make a classroom visit to share their knowledge.

Both because some parents may be wary of providing information, and because there are so many dysfunctional families these days, a teacher will need to be flexible in making assignments. Some students may not live with either parent, or may rarely see a parent who works late shift, or may not feel they can talk to a parent, and so will have a hard time with a few of the assignments (how they were named, collecting a family recipe). Alternatives might have to be suggested in these cases, such as having a student write about his or her nicknames rather than a given name, or getting information from another adult like a neighbor or foster parent. Several teachers who have tried this unit commented on the lack of any family celebrations, rituals or other traditions among their students; in this case, you might get them to talk about celebrations or traditions in some other group they belong to, such as a club, sports teams, or even the classroom.

This unit is designed to fit into a social studies class, Nevada history in particular, but with very little modification it can be used for English classes as well, and the assignments made into writing exercises. Toward the end of the unit I have made some suggestions for including folklife materials in a number of different subjects, from math to vocational education. Once you and your students have a basic understanding of what folklife is, you will see examples of it everywhere. In this way, without a lot of extra time or special lessons, folklife can become a recurring theme in all subject areas, just as it is woven throughout all facets of our lives.

LESSON ONE
What is Folklore?

Objective: Students will examine the basic characteristics of folklore using examples of their own lore.

Room organization: small groups of 2 to 5 students

Activity 1: Have each student make a paper airplane; anyone who does not know how can learn from another member of the group.

Activity 2: By asking questions about the making of paper airplanes, elicit a list of characteristics of folklore which should be written on the board.

Folklore is:

1. learned informally
2. shared within groups
3. traditional in nature
4. creative or expressive
5. exists in versions
6. anonymous in origin

For example:

1. "How did you learn to make a paper airplane?" should get answers about learning from other kids, by watching and doing, not in school or from books. This illustrates the first point, that folklore is learned and passed on informally.

2. Who makes paper airplanes? Kids, not adults (although all adults were once kids and do know how to make airplanes, they probably don't much anymore); the lore is shared by that group. Kids also share other traditions, such as games and jokes, that other groups don't use.

3. Do you think your parents or older brothers and sisters know how to make paper airplanes? They probably do; the tradition has been passed on for a long time, it is not new.

4. Do paper airplanes serve a purpose? Or are they for fun? They are not really functional, they serve as an outlet for creative expression.

5. Are all of the planes here exactly alike? They are all a little different, but they are still all recognizable as paper airplanes; they exist in versions.

6. Who made the first paper airplane? No one knows, but the idea has been picked up and passed down by generations of school children.

Many different types of objects and activities are included under the heading of folklife: oral lore such as stories, jokes and legends, songs, instrumental music, dance, beliefs and superstitions, celebrations and holidays, games, occupational skills, vernacular architecture, crafts and food, to name a few.

The students will probably be itching to throw their airplanes; you may want to let them do so before you get back to the lesson, or tell them to wait until the end of class. A target on the blackboard to aim for will help direct their energy and the planes. You might also suggest that they start a bulletin board on folklore, and put up a selection of airplanes to start it off.

Activity 3: In small groups, discuss and share various cures for hiccups. Let the kids talk about how they cure hiccups,

and see how many different cures they have heard. After a few minutes, lead a class discussion on hiccup cures, asking for all the different examples. Repeat the characteristics of folklore in relation to the cures.

Activity 4: In small groups, talk about some kids' games, such as hopscotch, hide and seek, jump rope, or whatever is popular at your school. Such things as rhymes to choose an 'it' in games, telephone pranks, tongue twisters, and jump-rope rhymes are all examples of children's folklore. Ask the students to think about how they learned the games, who plays them (boys or girls, younger or older kids), how the rules are set and if they can be changed, variations described by different kids. In a discussion with the whole class, ask for examples, and again relate games back to the characteristics of folklore on the board. Have students draw different hopscotch boards, playing fields or other visual aspects of games on the board. Some students may come up with examples of games from popular culture (board games, baseball, etc.). You can use this opportunity to explain the differences between them and folk games; they have formal rules, sometimes written down; the game is played the same way everywhere; it is learned in gym class, etc.

Assignment: Find out how you got your name (ask parents or other relatives). Who picked your name? When was it chosen? Is it a family name? How are others in your family named? Do you have any nicknames, and how did they originate? Who calls you by nicknames?

Children who have family problems may have a hard time with this assignment as given; suggest that they focus on nicknames as an alternative.

This activity might be a good one to start the school year, since it allows students to tell a little about themselves and get to know each other as they get to know names.

LESSON TWO
Family Folklore

Objectives:

1. Students shall identify aspects of family folklife through discussion of traditions of their own names.
2. Students shall look at family bonding and continuity through folk traditions.

Room organization: small groups of 2 to 5 students.

Activity 1: In small groups, share information gathered from assignment on how they got their name.

Activity 2: As a class, share examples of unusual naming traditions, different reasons for naming of two students with the same name, etc. Naming traditions can be based on religious or ethnic heritage (always naming the first son after the father or grandfather; saints' names in Catholic tradition), regional traditions, or individual family traditions (such as giving all the children the same initials). There are also traditional patterns of nicknames, for example when a parent and child have the same name. Relate the discussion back to the characteristics of folklore discussed in lesson one: naming traditions are shared in groups (family, ethnic, etc.), learned informally, passed down in groups, creative, varied, etc. This discussion can easily fill a class session, and lead to other family stories. See the book *A Celebration of American Family Folklore* (in bibliography) for examples and types of stories you can elicit from the kids.

Student Worlds, Student Words also has a chapter on naming traditions and some activities that can be developed using them.

Assignment: Collect a family recipe. Write it down, along with information on its origin (from another country or part of the U.S.), when it is prepared (special days, holidays), who makes it, and any special ingredients required. Alternatively, the recipe can come from a friend or neighbor, or from the student's own experience outside the family.

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LESSON THREE
Family Folklore

Objective:
Students shall identify those family activities which meet the criteria of folklore and folklife.

Activity 1: As a full class, share some of the recipes students have brought in. Relate the discussion back to the characteristics of folklore. Some of the recipes may be posted on the folklore bulletin board, or printed in a class cookbook.

Activity 2: In small groups of 5 or 6 students, play Family Folklore Card Game for 15-20 minutes (instructions next page).

Activity 3: As a full class, have each group choose the most interesting story that came up during the game, and share it with the class. Ask the students to relate the examples back to the characteristics of folklore discussed in the first lesson.

FOLKLORE CARD GAME

(Adapted from "4-H FOLKPATTERNS: Family Folklore" produced by the Cooperative Extension Service of Michigan State University)

Prepare ahead of time 3-by-5 index cards or pieces of paper with one of the following questions on each. Place the cards face down in the middle of the table. The first player picks a card and chooses a second player to answer the question on the card. After answering the question, the second player picks a card to ask a third player. This continues until all the questions have been answered. The game has no right or wrong answers, and there are no winners or losers. After some of the answers are given, let others share their answers to the same question. By sharing, the players will see that there are many similarities in the ways families traditionally behave.

QUESTIONS

- What music, songs or musical instruments does your family or other group enjoy?
- How did your parents meet and get married?
- Do you own anything that is not worth much money, yet is a prized possession you plan to keep?
- Think of a holiday, such as Christmas, Hanukkah, Easter or Thanksgiving, and the foods your family prepares for it. What one food would your family be sure to include in the celebration?
- Is there anything that has been

passed down through the generations in your family? (this could be an object, a story, or a tradition: a hunting rifle, a piece of furniture, jewelry, a picture, a family Bible, etc.)

- Did you have any beliefs or fears when you were very young that you no longer believe or fear?
- Describe your favorite family photograph.
- Can you recall the funniest mistake or worst accident that has happened in your kitchen?
- Where do you keep your personal treasures?
- How does your family celebrate Christmas/Hanukkah/birthdays?
- Describe a favorite costume or dress-up outfit you have worn.
- Have you ever bought or collected a souvenir?
- What do you to get well when you have a cold?
- What special privileges does the birthday person in your family have on his or her birthday?
- Is there a food your family prepares that others consider delicious?
- Can you think of a practical joke or prank that you have pulled or that has been pulled on you?
- Do you know the story of your name or nickname?
- Have you been to a family reunion, wedding, or anniversary party? How did you celebrate?
- Has your family saved any of your baby things such as toys, clothes, or identification bracelets?
- Can you tell any of the stories you've heard your family tell again and again?
- Does anyone in your family make faces or use gestures when they talk or at other times?
- What is your favorite holiday and how does your family celebrate it?
- Can you name all the places you have lived since you were born?
- What do you remember about bedtime when you were very young?
- Were there any rules in your home that you could not break?
- How do or did your grandparents earn a living?
- Has your family had any unusual good or bad luck?
- Tell us about a "first" for you—your first time to sleep over with a friend, first pet, first trip alone, first food you learned to cook, etc.
- Is there an eccentric or strange character in your family? Who is it and why?
- How do you get out loose baby teeth? What do you do with them?
- Do you sing songs or play games on long car or bus trips? What are they?
- What do you do for good luck?
- What things bring bad luck?
- What games do you play in the snow?
- How are you disciplined if you do something wrong at home?

Other questions may be added to this list. One teacher suggested that these questions would make good short free writing assignments; later they could be used as the basis for an autobiography.

LESSON FOUR
Folk Groups

Objective:
Students shall identify various folk groups they belong to and folk traditions of those groups.

Folk groups are composed of people who have something in common, something that binds them together more than superficial (such as being stuck in an airport together for a few hours, or living in the same apartment building). People who are related, who share the same religion, ethnicity or occupation, who live in a particular region of the country, or who belong to a common organization or meet together regularly, may develop traditions out of that shared experience or heritage.

Activity: In small groups, students will list the various folk groups to which they belong. Everyone is a member of numerous groups, and each has its own folklore and traditional culture. Examples include age groups (kids, teenagers, adults), sex groups, ethnic groups, religious groups, regional groups (Carson Valley, Elko County, the Westside of Las Vegas, Nevada), occupational groups, the family (whether it is traditional, single-parent, adoptive, extended, etc.), and interest groups (sports teams, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, 4-H, band, clubs). As a class, ask several students to list the groups to which they belong, and to name one folk tradition they share in each group (a children's joke, a game played only by girls, an ethnic food, a family birthday celebration, a local ghost story, a Girl Scout camp song parody).

Assignment: Write about your favorite group tradition. It can be a family birthday celebration, an object that has been handed down for generations, a joke that is pulled on new members of a club or team, the way a religious holiday is celebrated, a food from your ethnic group, a legend about your part of the state, etc.

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LESSON FIVE
Community Folklife

Objective: Students shall examine local community folklife and traditions.

Several alternative activities are suitable for this lesson. A field trip can be made to local museum or historic site to examine artifacts related to traditional life in the local community. The trip may encompass local history, but should be focused on the traditions of average people (ranchers, miners, housewives) and the things they made and did, and probably still do, as part of their everyday life. If possible, have a local storyteller or long-time resident accompany the class to talk about local traditions, legends, occupational practices. Ask students for stories they know about local characters, landmarks, haunted places, etc. If a cemetery is nearby, the class can go there to learn about traditional gravestones and how people personalize them (epitaphs, photographs, engravings of favorite things or pastimes, grave decoration). Graves of famous local people can be used to elicit stories and legends about them, too. Another possibility is a visit to the home or shop of a local traditional artist, such as a quilter, woodcarver, instrument maker or cook, or a trip to a ranch, mine, or other location where occupational traditions can be seen. A variation of this idea is to have an artist, performer, dancer or local storyteller come into the classroom and work with students, either demonstrating their skills, teaching the kids and letting them try themselves, or being interviewed by the students. See the sections later in this guide on doing fieldwork to locate local artists, and on arranging for a classroom visit.

In a subject such English, where field trips are not usually undertaken, this lesson can be devoted to the oral traditions of the local area. This would be a good time to talk about the difference between history and folklore; the history of a place has to be understood in order to understand its folk traditions, but folklore is very much alive—it is the past actively carried into the present. Students will doubtless know local legends about lost treasures, interesting characters, haunted places, how certain spots were named, etc. or an assignment can be given to find such a local story and write it down. More than one version will often be told by different students; this can lead to an interesting exercise by looking at what they have in common and how they differ.

A final possible activity is to watch a videotape on some aspect of Nevada traditional life (see resource listing) and discuss the elements of folklore that are shown.

ADDITIONAL LESSONS

The following lessons deal with specific aspects and genres of Nevada folklife. Once the first five introductory lessons are complete, the class can go on to study any or all of these units. You may choose those that are especially relevant to your community, that relate to a particular folk artist who will be visiting the classroom, that fit the interests and knowledge of the teacher and the students, or that can be introduced into other areas of study during the school year.

A. Oral Lore: legends, stories, jokes, rhymes, proverbs, language, naming

B. Music and Dance

C. Folk Crafts and Arts

D. Occupational and Recreational Lore and Skills

E. Material Culture: architecture, landscape, cemeteries

F. Folk Beliefs and Medicine

G. Foodways

ORAL TRADITIONS

Oral lore is perhaps the most pervasive of the traditional arts, which makes it both very accessible (everyone knows jokes and tells stories) and also very likely to be taken for granted. In this lesson, students can be encouraged to become aware of aspects of oral tradition in their own lives and to become attuned to elements of tradition in what they hear around them in their family and community.

Folk speech includes regional accents, local terms, specialized language, and other elements that make up the distinctive speech patterns of a region or occupation. Because Nevada has always been a transient state, with people passing through or moving in from other parts of the country, it is not strongly associated with a regional accent. There is a slight "Mormon accent" in parts of eastern Nevada; a word like 'barn' may be pronounced 'born', 'barbecue' becomes 'borbecue', and 'Mormon' is 'Marmon'. There is also a more nebulous Elko County accent, particularly among cowboys and ranchers.

Ethnic and occupational groups of course have their own specialized language, some of which has been added to the vocabularies of other Nevadans. Local communities also have their own shorthand for referring to landmarks and giving directions; it might be fun to have students think of local terms that could be confusing to outsiders, and to discuss how they came to know about them.

Many ethnic and tribal groups in Nevada have maintained the native language of their people; it might be interesting to talk with bilingual students about when they use English and when their other language.

Jokes and riddles are obvious examples of traditional oral forms. They are learned from other people, and change form slightly with each retelling. While a joke about a recent event may not have the depth in time usually associated with folk traditions, the fact that it has spread so rapidly indicates that it is widely shared and that it addresses something important in the culture. Jokes can be a way of dealing with sometimes uncomfortable situations. The rash of jokes about the Challenger disaster and the rapidity with which they spread across the country indicated how important the tragedy was to the national psyche. Many of the jokes were morbid and crude, but they fulfilled an important function in working through feelings about the explosion. People only make jokes about things they care about and that affect their lives.

Proverbs are short, usually fixed, phrases that encapsulate some bit of wisdom to be passed on at appropriate moments. Students can no doubt come up with dozens once they are prompted with a few suggestions. Perhaps students could give a situation when each proverb might be used, putting it in context. Another interesting exercise is to come up with pairs of proverbs that seem to give opposing advice, for example, "Too many cooks spoil the broth" versus "Many hands make light work;" or "Look before you leap" versus "He who hesitates is lost." If your classroom has students from different ethnic groups,

ask them for proverbs from their culture and an explanation of what they mean; then see if there is an equivalent Anglo-American proverb.

Legends are stories, usually connected with a specific place or person, and generally told as if they were true. The teller may not admit to personal belief in a legend, but it is still told and passed on. Ghost stories, haunted places, local heroes and tragic events all serve as the basis for legends. Nevada has Native American legends, often connected with natural features such as mountains or creeks; legends about historical figures such as Kit Carson, Snowshoe Thomson, or local pioneers; tales about bodies mysteriously preserved in the cold depths of Lake Tahoe; stories about mine disasters, mishaps on the emigrant trail, and workers killed building Hoover Dam; lost gold mine stories; and countless local ghosts.

Urban legends are a more recent variant of the typical legend form, and are found all over the country. Details are changed to fit the local community (they are always set in a recognizable nearby location) and they are alleged to have happened to a 'friend of a friend.' Everyone has heard about the rat in the Kentucky Fried Chicken, the woman who tried to dry her dog in the microwave, the babysitter who gets scary phone calls, or the horrible things that happen to teenagers parked in the local lovers lane. Jan Brunvand's four books on urban legends—*The Vanishing Hitchhiker, The Choking Doberman, The Mexican Pet,* and *Curses! Broiled Again!*—are good collections of these stories with explanations about what they mean and why people tell them. Your students will doubtless have examples of these kinds of stories, although they probably do not realize that they are told all over the country, and may even protest vehemently that they are true and really happened to 'a guy my cousin met.' Some of these tales undoubtedly do have a factual foundation, but they certainly haven't occurred in as many places as their telling suggests.

Rhymes and folk poetry have gotten a lot of attention lately in Nevada, due to the rediscovery of the century-old tradition of cowboy poetry. The Victorian era, when cowboy culture was in its heyday, was full of poetry and had a strong tradition of composing and reciting verses. Everyone did it; the cowboy just kept it up after most people had dropped it. Cowboy poetry expresses the interests and feelings of the people who write it; it is their form of creative culture, to be shared with other members of their occupational group. Cowboy poetry deals with everyday things—horses, cows, fixing tractors, the land—whatever strikes the writer as worth commenting on.

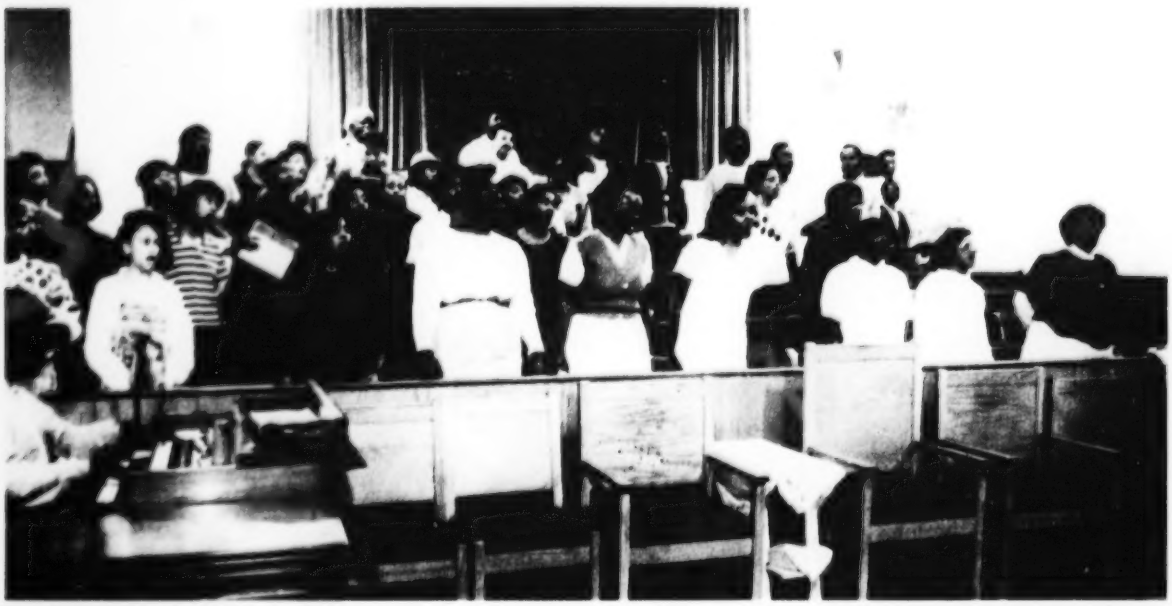
MUSIC and DANCE

Folk music includes both vocal and instrumental traditions, everything from a child singing a parody of a television commercial to a Basque dance band. **Folk songs** are learned informally and shared within family or community groups; what is popularly called folk music is often the creation of an individual songwriter, perhaps in the style of traditional music but not truly a traditional song or performance. "Happy Birthday" is a good example of a folk song, as are all the parodies it has spawned, and which your students doubtless know and would be glad to sing. Students know lots of parodies, many of them about school and teachers. They also parody popular songs and commercials.

Other traditional songs include such favorites as "On Top of Spaghetti," songs sung on long trips such as "Ninety-Nine Bottles of Beer," sports cheers and songs, congratulatory songs like "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," cowboy songs, Native American chants and songs, and songs from different ethnic cultures.

Instrumental music covers a broad range, from a guitar played to accompany a cowboy song, to old-time fiddle traditions, to the drum groups of Native American culture, to Mexican mariachi ensembles, to accordions and clarinets playing Basque *jotas*. The fiddle tradition is not strong in Nevada, possibly because it tends to be a rural musical form and so many of Nevada's towns were settled by urban people. Old timers tell of dances with fiddles that used to be held on ranches and in town, but very little is left of that music. The town of Austin holds Nevada's only fiddle contest, each June, which is a good place to hear what the state has to offer in the way of traditional fiddle and guitar music.

Cowboy music is to a large extent an outgrowth of cowboy poetry, and many



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MUSIC and DANCE

favorite songs were originally recited as poems. Instruments were hard to carry along on trail drives and roundups, although more recently guitars have become popular for accompanying singing. There is also a tradition of unaccompanied cowboy singing.

In the mining and railroad towns of Nevada there were always a few pianos, used for dancing and singing in saloons and to accompany dances. Players performed traditional songs and popular tunes of the day, often picking up the melody by ear. A few of these performers still play, although you may have to hunt for them.

Accordions were popular in the Basque, Italian and Eastern European cultures that settled Nevada. Any of the several Basque festivals around the state will feature accordion music, usually to accompany traditional dancing.

Indian pow-wows, such as those held at the Stewart Indian School in Carson City, the Reno-Sparks Colony, the Owyhee Reservation in Elko County, and the Pine Nut Festival on the Walker River Reservation in Schurz, always feature Native American drumming, singing and dancing.

Closely related to music is **dance**, which is a form of expression found in every culture. Native American round dances, Basque jotas, Hawaiian hula, Western two-steps, and break dancing are just a few examples of traditional dances. Wherever there is traditional music, there is likely to be dancing as well.

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FOLK CRAFTS AND ART

As with other aspects of folklife, folk crafts are those learned informally, from family and community members in face-to-face interactions. Practitioners of folk crafts and arts are good choices for classroom visitors. Students can sometimes try their own hands at the skill if enough materials can be found, which helps them understand the complexity of folk arts and the time needed to master them.

Examples of traditional craftspeople to look for in your community are quilters, embroiderers, rug braiders and other needleworkers from many ethnic groups; Indian basketmakers, beadworkers and buckskin tanners; makers of cowboy gear such as saddles, braided rawhide gear, boots, horsehair mecartys, bits and spurs, and hitched horsehair gear; blacksmiths and farriers; Mexican piñata makers; musical instrument makers; and woodcarvers. Old-timers may have collections of local crafts and tools accumulated over the years that they would be willing to share with students in a classroom visit or field trip.

Another type of folk craft found in larger cities, and particularly relevant to Nevada, is the bending of glass tubes for neon signs. Glass benders learn their skill through an apprenticeship system, and have to know how to convert a design on paper into a three-dimensional sign. Their knowledge extends to knowing what gases to use to produce particular colors as well. The audio tape "Home Means Nevada" includes a segment on glass bender Stan Forrest of Las Vegas talking about his skill and how it was learned.

Some communities have a resident known for his or her fantastically decorated yard, or a collection of artifacts, or a unique construction of some sort. These are sometimes called environmental artists, and while they may be acting based on an individual and personal vision, they often use traditional materials and skills, and they are part of a larger pattern of environmental art found all over the country. Nevada's best-known example is Rolling Thunder's construction, Thunder Mountain, at Imlay, between Lovelock and Winnemucca on Interstate 80, but nearly every community will have a couple of yards decorated with old bottles, collected artifacts, painted rocks, or more elaborate constructions that are smaller versions illustrating the same principle.

Folk craftspeople are sometimes hard to find, since they usually produce their work for family members or friends rather than commercially for a larger market. There is also likely to be some overlap between the folk and popular levels of culture, as with the traditional quilter who learned from her mother, but gets ideas for patterns from magazines and books, or the rawhide braider who taught himself new knots from a book on braiding.

OCCUPATIONAL & RECREATIONAL LORE & SKILLS

Any group of people that spends a lot of time together will soon develop its own folk traditions—stories, jokes, beliefs, language, crafts, and skills not learned formally. Thus, many occupational groups have specialized terms and tools connected with their work, and will tell stories about events and incidents that may be unintelligible to the outsider. Their traditional culture serves to bind them together and give them a sense of belonging, while at the same time setting them apart from others. A large portion of the time newcomers spend "learning the ropes" is actually initiation into the folk culture of the group.

Teachers have their own traditional culture, full of funny and not-so-funny stories, esoteric knowledge about dealing with difficult kids, strange parents or a frustrating administration, and little tricks passed on from teacher to teacher over lunch or in the lounge. These are the things that weren't taught in education classes in college, but that are vital for survival in the classroom, and that create a community of shared experience and knowledge passed on within the group.

Other examples of folk groups in Nevada are ranchers, cowboys, farmers, miners, prospectors, military and government workers, hunting and fishing guides, casino workers, waitresses, nurses and firefighters. Cowboys, for example, have all kinds of tools and equipment with specialized uses and names (bosal, mecarty, hackamore, the parts of a saddle), a wide knowledge of horses and cattle, and traditional poems,

stories and songs about their life. Miners, especially underground miners, have an incredible specialized vocabulary for describing the parts of a mine and the tools and skills they use. They also acquire beliefs and superstitions about the dangers in a mine, and tell stories of near-misses and fatal accidents. Their lore has been passed on from the time of the Comstock Lode, when underground mining got its start, and is still relevant today.

Prospectors may have traditional knowledge about what to look for in the hunt for minerals (although they may be

reluctant to share their secrets); Nevada Test Site workers have stories about mutant animals in underground tunnels; fishing guides have traditional ways for finding their quarry; casino workers also have a special language; and farmers have ways of predicting weather and a knowledge of the yearly cycle of planting and harvesting.

· A member of such a group—an insider—is almost a necessity to help students study and understand occupational lore. A parent may be a good source; find out if they are willing to come to class and be interviewed by the students about their special knowledge.

Hunting, fishing and camping are important forms of recreation for many Nevadans, and have rich forms of folklore associated with them. A youngster's first hunting trip is always memorable, and probably has been preserved in family stories. There are traditional foods cooked in camp, and sometimes only in camp. There are favorite places to hunt and fish, rituals for finding animals, family rifles that have been passed down through generations, theories as to the best kind of bait, and songs and stories that are a part of camp life.

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MATERIAL CULTURE

While **material culture** refers to any tangible element of folklife, as distinguished from stories, music, beliefs or skills, this lesson will deal with the material elements of the larger environment: **architecture**, **landscape**, and **cemeteries**. Often the most distinguishing feature of a community is how it looks; how it is laid out on the land, the types of houses, barns, fences, yard decorations and landscaping that are typical of the area. The neighborly ranches of western Nevada's farming valleys contrast with the remote settlements of the eastern ranching counties. A mining town has a distinctive profile, often nestled in a steep canyon or perched on a mountainside, and differs sharply from the flat, square street plan of a railroad town stretched along the tracks. In a city, neighborhoods are often distinguishable by the styles of houses and yards; decorations, religious shrines, paint colors, and gardens are unique to particular groups.

Geography, climate, economics, transportation and ethnic heritage all contribute to a region's appearance. A mining town in the Toiyabes will of physical necessity look different from a mining town in a valley. A ranch in a rainy area will need a big barn to store hay, while another where there is little precipitation will have hay kept in stacks outside. A railroad town has different needs than a farming town. Proximity to sources of outside supplies, via roads or rails, can determine a town's size and layout. Ethnic makeup can also affect a community's appearance—Italian stonemasons in Paradise Valley built distinctive rock buildings; German farmers in Carson Valley built big barns; ethnic neighborhoods in Las Vegas or Reno have their own characteristic uses of space.

To understand why a particular area looks the way it does, then, you have to know something of its history. Because buildings and landscapes are more permanent than other elements of traditional culture, that can be used to understand local history in a new way, and to make it come alive. History is not dead, it lives on all around us in our houses and our daily environment. And it is traditional culture that makes the connections between the past and the present.

Specific elements of the countryside to look for include houses, barns, and outbuildings such as sheds, blacksmith shops, granaries, cellars, animal houses (how are they used? has their use changed over the years? what materials are they built of? why are they arranged the way they are?); fences, gates and corrals (how are they built and used? are they decorated?); hay derricks and stackers; yards and yard decorations (plants, old machinery, antlers, collections of "stuff"); and mailboxes.

Another fascinating aspect of the environment to study is **cemeteries**. Changes in markers over time can tell a lot about changing attitudes toward death, and shifts in ethnic populations, religious groups and occupations. Old Victorian stones often featured sentimental symbolism popular at the time—the weeping willow, broken rose, parting hands, lambs for children, etc. Epitaphs are frequently written in the language of the old country of the deceased, and the

place of birth is listed on the stone; this indicates how important the person's heritage was, and that he or she wanted it remembered by future generations. One ethnic tradition found in Nevada is the use of photographs on stones of Italians; the cemeteries in Dayton and Yerington have good examples of this practice.

More recent stones frequently have some indication of the interests or personality of the deceased. Often a representation of the person's occupation or hobby will be carved on the stone—a horse or a brand for a rancher, a pickaxe and shovel for a miner, a train engine for a railroad worker, a fish or deer for an avid sportsman, motorcycles, airplanes, pets; just when you think you've seen everything, something new will pop up. This trend illustrates the growing need for individual identity even in death, a result of our increasingly regulated and homogenized society. Religious symbols are on the wane on tombstones, and secular interests are taking their place. Grave decorations can also indicate a lot about about the deceased, since family members often place favorite objects on a grave, especially for a child. Any graveyard will have its share of homemade markers as well as commercially made ones. These range from simple wooden crosses to large cement obelisks inlaid with local rocks. In many cemeteries, there is a separate section for Native American burials. These graves are often mounded and have a row of flowers along the pile of dirt.

The overall landscaping and layout of cemeteries can be interesting to study as well. In Nevada, trying to maintain a lawn is usually futile effort, so many cemeteries are bare dirt. In some places, the graves are bare as well, except for the flowers and objects left by mourners. Other communities will have a tradition of putting astroturf or carpet over graves, frequently on a cement slab, and family plots, whether bare or covered, often have a low wall or fence around them. Graves almost always face east (in Christian tradition, the direction Christ will rise at the Second Coming); where there are exceptions to this rule, it can be illuminating to try to find out why.

No one is formally taught how to arrange a cemetery or decorate a grave or choose a marker. This knowledge is part of the community; people see what others around them are doing, or observe religious, ethnic or family traditions connected with death and burial, and base their actions on what has gone before. Changes are slow and subtle, but a graveyard that has been used for 100 years can be used to learn a great deal about the history and culture of a place.

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FOLK BELIEFS & MEDICINE

Folk beliefs include such things as good and bad luck signs, traditional weather predictions, omens and signs that predict the future, and planting lore. Students will no doubt have dozens of examples to contribute, from beliefs involving Friday the thirteenth, to finding lucky pennies, to the tooth fairy, to beliefs about lucky items of clothing (worn during tests or important athletic games), to games for predicting the name of one's future spouse (usually played by girls). More examples can be gathered from family members, for example weather and planting lore in a farming or ranching community which depends on the weather. Dowsing or water witching is also a common practice in agricultural communities and where wells need to be dug. Beliefs and superstitions tend to cluster around events and situations that are unpredictable and to an extent uncontrollable, like the weather or future events.

Certain **life cycle events** seem to call forth traditional beliefs as well, especially transitional times such as birth, marriage and death. These events are called "rites of passage" and are important but stressful moments in a person's life. Marriage, for example, has the traditions of the bride wearing "something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue," the belief that the woman who catches the bouquet will be the next to get married, the practice of saving a piece of the wedding cake to be eaten on the couple's first anniversary, and in some communities the "shivaree," a loud late night visit to the couple's house to play tricks on them.

Nevada is especially rich in **gambling lore**, naturally; a classic case of beliefs centering on unpredictable situations. Slot players have theories about where the good machines are located in a row, and whether a machine is due for a jackpot. Craps players have ways of making dice lucky and sayings to encourage good rolls. Card players have superstitions about good and bad hands, as well as traditional systems of when and how much to bet. Women tend to pick lucky or significant numbers when playing Keno; men will choose numbers in rows or other regular arrangements on the card. The examples are endless.

Folk medicine usually exists alongside modern, conventional medicine, and many people use both systems. Folk medicine may be used for minor ailments, such as hiccups or scrapes or upset stomachs, where the full force of modern medicine is not called for. It may also be used in addition to a visit to the doctor or hospital, with the explanation that it can't hurt and may even help. Folk medicine is most often connected with maladies that are least understood, such as the common cold, warts, fever blisters, and cancer; as with folk belief, the more uncertainty is involved, the more traditional cures will be called into play.

Certain ethnic or regional groups may have beliefs about sickness caused by witchcraft, spells, or the evil eye. There may be traditional beliefs to determine who caused the illness, and traditional cures for it. In such cases, community specialists in folk medicine may be called in to help cure the afflicted person.

Native American tribes also have traditional "Indian doctors" who may use herbal medicine along with songs and prayers to cure the sick. Smoke is an important part of ritual Indian curing, although the traditional sagebrush smoke may be replaced by cigarette smoke. This is a nice example of how ancient practices can be continued by adapting them to modern circumstances; the belief and the effect are the same, only the means have been changed.

Folk religion, like folk medicine, exists alongside the formal and standardized practices of the larger culture. Specialists such as faith healers may call on religions power in their work, but their role is often not accepted within the formal hierarchy of the church. Stories of religious experiences often follow traditional patterns; the Three Nephites of Mormon tradition are a good example of this, as are conversion stories among other Christian groups.

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FOODWAYS

Because food is necessary for survival and so much a part of everyday life, it is often the longest-lasting element of traditional culture. Members of ethnic groups who come to this country may take on modern American dress, language, and jobs, but at home they eat like they did in their home country. Even if new foods are introduced, traditional foods will be kept for special occasions and holidays, and can serve as symbols of heritage and pride in one's origins.

Foodways includes everything connected with eating and drinking, from the growing of a garden and raising of livestock, to gathering wild foods, to preserving food, or acquiring it commercially, and preparing, serving and eating. In addition to ethnic or cultural heritage, location and occupation can also affect the foods traditionally eaten in a community. Ranch families usually have all the beef they can use, often eaten at three meals a day. Residents of a remote mining camp, on the other hand, must often subsist on canned goods much of the time, although with modern transportation and electricity available this is less so today than in the past. Sheepherders have food brought to their camp once a week, and cook on a wood stove in their sheepwagon or over an open fire if they live in tents. Likewise, cowboys out on a roundup will cook over an open fire, using dutch ovens for everything from biscuits and bread to stew. The ranch cook, presiding over a large cookhouse where hired hands eat together, is another unique representative of Nevada's culinary heritage.

Ethnic restaurants and groceries are good places to start in researching food traditions of a particular group. Restaurant food will often be modified to suit American tastes, and home cooking may be considerably different. Students from various ethnic groups can be good sources of classroom discussion of traditional foodways, and parents can be asked to demonstrate the making of certain foods in a class visit.

Foodways encompass more than just the particular food and its recipe, however. Foods are often connected with certain events, holidays, religious celebrations or times of the year. A particular food may always be made by a particular person, or handed down through the women in a family. There may be taboos about eating certain foods at certain times. Table manners, playing with food, and food as folk medicine all come under the heading of foodways.

FOLKLORE THROUGHOUT THE CURRICULUM

Although this curriculum is aimed at incorporating folklife into social studies classes, it should be obvious that almost any subject area could benefit from the inclusion of local folk traditions. The following list is just a preliminary suggestion of the potential folklife has to bring life and variety to every class in a school.

English: Have students use their own traditions and stories as subject matter for writing assignments. Asking kids to write about how they were named, or their favorite holiday traditions, will guarantee interest, and no one will say they can't think of what to write. Elizabeth Simons' book *Student Worlds, Student Words* (listed in the bibliography) is an excellent resource for using folklore in writing classes. Another approach in English classes is to look for elements of folklore in the literature your students are reading. Writers such as Mark Twain incorporate things like jokes, superstitions, local legends, nicknames, and lots of children's lore in their stories. Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* is full of examples, as are Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* books.

Math: The geometry of quilt patterns, measuring lumber to build a shed, counting cows or sheep being branded or sold, and measuring ingredients for cooking are just a few examples of the ways math is applied in traditional life. There are math riddles that kids test each other with; and we are always approximating costs, distances and other amounts with traditional formulas.

Science: Science classes can explore the scientific basis for such folk practices as dowsing or water witching, the use of plants for medicine, traditional agricultural skills and beliefs, natural materials used in crafts such as willow basketry or buckskin tanning, and the ecology of ranching, farming and hunting.

Art: Traditional artists can be used very effectively in the classroom. Demonstrations and hands-on practice in quilting, cowboy leatherwork and rawhide braiding, Native American willow basketry,

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FOLKLORE THROUGHOUT THE CURRICULUM

beadwork, embroidery, or woodcarving will all expose students to different esthetics and techniques. Students can also see that art and artists are all around them in their community.

Music: Traditional fiddlers, accordion players, piano players, singers and dancers cán add a lot to a music classroom. As with artists, musicians are all around us and students can see how music can be a part of life even if one is not a professional performer. In an ethnically diverse urban area, similar traditions of several groups can be presented and compared—for example Mexican guitarists, Greek bozouki players and Hawaiian ukelele players.

Vocational Education: Woodcarvers, musical instrument makers, builders, saddle makers, leatherworkers, ranchers and farmers, miners, neon glass benders and members of just about any occupational group will have their own traditions and skills that can be shared with students. The skills they have learned on the job and from old-timers in their profession are often the richest and most important, and this is an important idea for students to understand. This does not denigrate what is learned formally in school, but just makes us aware that there is more to a job than the routine skills.

Home Economics: Traditional cooks from various ethnic groups can share their recipes and skills in cooking classes, and traditional quilting, knitting or embroidery would be wonderful additions to a sewing class.

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FIELDWORK

Finding Folk Artists and Resources in Your Community

The key to bringing a unit on Nevada folklife alive for your students is using real-life examples from their own lives and their community. You can see how well they respond and learn when their own traditions are used to illustrate points in the lessons; use that same sense of relevance to broaden their exposure by using local folks to extend their understanding beyond the classroom and family. This brief unit cannot hope to list specific examples and practitioners of traditional arts and skills for every area of the state, so you will need to do some research on your own to find resources for the classroom.

A good place to start is with the list of resource people and institutions at the end of the unit. Some fieldwork in your area may well have already been done, and the resource people can put you in touch with people who would be good sources of information on local traditions and who could visit your classroom. You yourself may know old-timers, craftspeople or performers already—by all means ask them about helping out. The families of your students are also a good source of information—maybe someone's father is a Mexican corrido singer or a cowboy poet, or maybe their grandmother cooks traditional black soul food or spicy Thai fare. The students themselves, in fact, may be members of a Basque dance troupe, live on a ranch, or be learning Armenian embroidery from their mother—make them a "visiting folk artist" and have other students interview them about their knowledge.

If calling on all these resources still leaves you with some gaps in your knowledge, a little fieldwork may be in order. The booklet "Folklife and Fieldwork," available free from the American Folklife Center (see bibliography) is a good basic introduction to field techniques and what to look for. Talk to friends and family about the project and the kinds of people you are looking for; they may have leads in areas of your community you are unfamiliar with. Then broaden your net and approach local businesses, clubs, stores—anyplace that might have a connection to traditional artists. The following list is just to get you started; the kinds of places you will look will of course depend on the size and nature of your community.

- Ethnic restaurants and groceries: ethnic traditions including food, music, dance, crafts; history of particular ethnic groups in your area.
- Ethnic clubs and associations: same as above.
- Western stores, tack and feed stores: long-time ranchers; cowboy poets; makers of saddles, bits and spurs, horse gear, farriers, etc.
- Agricultural extension offices: history of ranching and farming, local crops and livestock, yearly cycle of ranching, water witching, local ranchers.
- Churches: especially those with ethnic congregations, such as black, Greek Orthodox, Hispanic Catholic, or Korean, Jewish synagogues, and Mormon congregations. Churches often sponsor cultural events such as festivals, bazaars, and saints' days that incorporate traditional foods, music and beliefs.
- Indian tribal offices and senior cen-

ters: many tribes have cultural programs already set up, and can help identify basketmakers, beadworkers, storytellers, musicians, dancers and traditional cooks. Smoke shops and other tribal stores usually sell Indian crafts and may direct you to local makers.

- Mining and prospecting supply stores
- Fabric and quilt stores: traditional quilters and needleworkers.
- Bars and saloons, especially in a small town
- Senior citizens centers
- Hunting and fishing guide services: guides have an intimate knowledge of the local landscape and wildlife, often learned traditionally.
- Local festivals and celebrations: Indian pow-wows, Basque festivals, saints day celebrations, rodeos, county fairs, food festivals, church homecomings, ethnic and religious holidays (Columbus Day, St. Patrick's Day, Mormon Pioneer Day [July 24], Chinese New Year, Cinco de Mayo, Juneteenth, etc.). These occasions are usually rich in traditional performances, crafts, beliefs, and foods and can provide an opportunity to observe folk culture in action and to talk to outstanding artists and knowledgeable members of a folk community.
- Local museums, historical societies and libraries: don't forget these obvious sources of local history and culture. Often paid or volunteer staff members have an extensive knowledge of the community and can direct you to old-timers with traditional knowledge and skills.

The information you gather through fieldwork can be used in a number of ways. You will have specific examples to use in class lessons on various aspects of Nevada folklife. If you took pictures of people, events, or objects, they can be used to make lessons even more interesting. Tape recordings of music or stories are also good for classroom use.

To really help your students understand local traditions, you can invite a folk artist or performer into your class, or take a field trip to his or her home or shop (see the next section on how to arrange such a visit). You might also want to plan a trip to a local museum with an old-timer, who can talk about the displays and help bring them alive for the students. While traveling, be sure to have students notice the local landscape, buildings, neighborhoods, cemeteries, mines and other elements of the area that make it unique.

Finally, if you have the time and a capable class, you can have the students themselves conduct tape recorded interviews with tradition bearers, take photographs, and write up articles for publication, either in a local newspaper or in a school publication. The well-known Foxfire cultural journalism program in Georgia does just this with great success. They have been putting out a magazine for 20 years, and have had a dozen best-selling books, all written by high school students. See the bibliography for references on this program, and where to write for information on a network of Nevada teachers that is being developed.

FOLK ARTISTS IN THE CLASSROOM

Bringing a folk artist or tradition bearer into school may be the only way some students can get to see and talk to a traditional artist face to face. Often folk arts are maintained and passed on within a close community and outsiders may never know they even exist. By making students and others aware of the diversity of skills and cultures in their own locale, they can learn to appreciate different traditions and to become more attuned to artistic elements in their own lives.

Arranging for a folk artist to visit your school should not be difficult or complicated, but there are a few things to think about to make the experience pleasant for everyone. The ideal visit will be with one class at a time. Most folk arts are intimate in scale (with the exception of some music and dance traditions) and are not suited to large workshops or assemblies. Students should be able to see what is going on, and should be encouraged to ask questions. They should be prepared ahead of time with background information on the artist and his or her art.

Check with the visitor when setting up a day and time for the visit, make sure they have transportation to the school and that someone will meet them when they arrive. Ask what materials and samples they will be bringing, and if there is anything you can provide, such as tables, water, containers, etc. If they will be visiting more than one class, try to have a break in between, since work-

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FOLK ARTISTS IN THE CLASSROOM

ing with kids can be tiring. Offer the use of the teacher's lounge, something to drink, and lunch if they will be there during lunchtime. It can be lots of fun for students to try their own hands at a craft, but finding enough materials can be a problem. An alternative is to have a few samples and let students take turns trying; this might work with rawhide braiding, willow basketry, or quilting, for example. Work with the artist ahead of time to prepare these kinds of samples. Performers can let children join in on songs, try a musical instrument, or teach them a dance as a way of getting them involved.

An artist from a performing tradition may also be appropriate for a school assembly, although classroom visits will probably be more beneficial to the students. A musician, singer, or cowboy poet, for example, could perform for a larger group as long as he or she is at the school and is willing, so more kids could at least be exposed to their art.

If at all possible, visiting folk artists should be paid for their time and mileage. Many folk artists hold regular jobs and may have to take time off to come to your school. Others are self-employed in their art or craft (a saddle-maker, quilter or basketmaker, for example) and should be compensated for their time away from paying work. Professional painters, dancers and musicians are paid for their work as artists in residence, and folk artists should be, too. Even if the artist is the parent of a student and offers to volunteer, it is nice to make the effort to pay them, even if only for mileage if they must travel a significant distance.

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NEVADA FOLKLORE RESOURCES

FOLK ARTS PROGRAM
Nevada State Council
on the Arts
329 Flint Street
Reno, NV 89501
(702) 688-1225
Contact: Andrea Graham, Folk Arts Program Director

The Folk Arts Program was established at the Arts Council in 1985 to research, promote and present the traditional arts of Nevada. The program provides technical assistance and information; maintains an archive of photographs, sound recordings and other materials; conducts surveys of traditional arts; runs a Folk Arts Apprenticeship program; and produces exhibits, publications, festivals and audio-visual materials on Nevada folklife. The Arts Council also has a grants program to fund projects in the folk arts, and an Artists-in-Residence program that can be used to pay folk artists for residencies in schools. This is a good place to start when looking for information and resources from your area of the state.

COWBOY POETRY GATHERING
P.O. Box 888
Elko, NV 89801
(702) 738-7508
Contact: Tara McCarty, General Manager

The first Cowboy Poetry Gathering was held in 1985, and has been held annually ever since on the last weekend in January in Elko. This event brings poets and reciters from all over the West to share the century-old tradition of cowboy poetry. The event features free poetry sessions all day, special evening performances, cowboy music, craft exhibits and films. It has become the cowboy's cultural event of the year and receives national publicity. Books, tapes and films on cowboy poetry and cowboy culture are also available through the Gathering office; write for a free catalog.

NEVADA HUMANITIES COMMITTEE
1101 N. Virginia St.
P.O. Box 8029
Reno, NV 89507
(702) 784-6587
Judith Winzeler, Director

The Nevada Humanities Committee has been good about funding folklife-related projects, including the Cowboy Poetry Gathering and the development of this curriculum. They have a resource library of films, videotapes, slide shows and exhibits, a number of which deal with

traditional culture, and which are available for loan. All the films listed in the bibliography are available through the resource center; write for a complete catalog.

FOXFIRE IN NEVADA
c/o Donald Bear
College of Education
University of Nevada Reno
Reno, NV 89557
(702) 784-4951

The Foxfire Program is a whole educational philosophy based on student-centered and -directed learning and the need for students to be involved in the larger community. A statewide teacher network is developing and there are periodic workshops on the Foxfire Program, coordinated by the UNR College of Education. The original Foxfire program in Georgia started with students interviewing local residents about their traditions and history, and publishing articles in their own magazine.

FIFE FOLKLORE CONFERENCE
Utah State University
Logan, UT 84322

The Fife Folklore Conference is held for a week every year in early June, and is aimed primarily at teachers (recertification and college credit are available). It provides a basic introduction to folklore and folklife, and then focuses on a particular aspect of that field—storytelling, supernatural lore, ethnic lore, etc. Faculty members include university professors and public sector folklorists from around the country.

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FOLKLORE BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTORY TEXTS

These are college-level textbooks, useful for gaining a more in-depth understanding of folklore and folklife.

Brunvand, Jan H. *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction* (third ed.). New York: W.W. Norton, 1988.

Dorson, Richard M., ed. *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Dorson, Richard M., ed. *Handbook of American Folklore.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983.

Toelken, Barre. *The Dynamics of Folklore.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979.

FIELDWORK

Bartis, Peter. *Folklife and Fieldwork: A Layman's Introduction to Field Techniques.* Washington, D.C.: American Folklife Center, 1990.
A good, short introduction to fieldwork, with a list of suggested topics. Single copies available free from the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

Ives, Edward D. *The Tape-Recorded Interview: A Manual for Field Workers in Folklore and Oral History.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980.
Excellent, practical, concise guide to field techniques.

Jackson, Bruce. *Fieldwork.* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987.
More theoretical and ethical details, along with the practical.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

Zeitlin, Steven J., Amy J. Kotkin and Holly Cutting Baker. *A Celebration of American Family Folklore.* New York: Pantheon, 1982.
Excellent resource for examples of family stories; includes a chapter on collecting one's own family folklore.

Brunvand, Jan H. *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and Their Meanings.* New York: W. W. Norton, 1981.
Analysis of those stories we all know, the ones that happened to "a friend of a friend," such as the "Kentucky Fried Rat," scary babysitter stories, and dogs in microwaves. Brunvand has written three more books on the subject, *The Choking Doberman , The Mexican Pet,* and *Curses! Broiled Again!*

Bronner, Simon J. *American Children's Folklore.* Little Rock, August House, 1988.
A collection of contemporary children's lore, including jokes, tongue twisters, games, autograph inscriptions, song parodies, riddles, ghost stories, beliefs and toys. A good source for examples to get kids started thinking of their own traditions.

Allen, Barbara and Lynwood Montell. *From Memory to History.* Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1981.
About using and evaluating oral sources in historical research, including recognizing elements of folklore.

NEVADA and WESTERN EXAMPLES

Graham, Andrea. *Nevada Folklife: A Guide.* Reno: Nevada State Council on the Arts, 1990.

Graham, Andrea and Blanton Owen. *Lander County Line: Folklife in Central Nevada.* Reno: Nevada State Council on the Arts, 1988.
Booklet based on a survey of folklife in Lander County conducted in the spring of 1988.

Luster, Michael and Blanton Owen. *In a High and Glorious Place: Folklife in Lincoln County, Nevada.* Reno: Nevada State Council on the Arts, 1987.
A 1987 survey of southern Nevada folklife resulted in this booklet and an exhibit.

Nevada Folk Arts Apprenticeships 1988-1989 and *1989-1991.* Reno: Nevada State Council on the Arts.
This biennial publication features the artists

who have participated in Nevada's Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program, which pays master traditional artists to teach their skills to dedicated apprentices.

Marshall, Howard W. and Richard E. Ahlborn. *Buckaroos in Paradise: Cowboy Life in Northern Nevada*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981.
Exhibit catalog resulting from the American Folklife Center's two-year study of traditional ranching in Paradise Valley, north of Winnemucca.

Carter, Thomas and Carl Fleischhauer. *The Grouse Creek Cultural Survey: Integrating Folklife and Historic Preservation Field Research*. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1988.
Report on an intensive, interdisciplinary survey of the ranching community of Grouse Creek in northwestern Utah.

Cannon, Hal, ed. *Cowboy Poetry: A Gathering*. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1985.
An anthology of classic and modern cowboy poetry, inspired by the annual Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko. There are lots of other cowboy poetry books and tapes, many self-published by local authors.

Wheat, Margaret. *Survival Arts of the Primitive Paiutes*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1967.
Despite its unfortunate title, a good study, in words and photos, of traditional Paiute crafts and skills.

Fife, Austin and Alta Fife. *Saints of Sage and Saddle: Folklore Among the Mormons*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1980.

The following three folk art exhibit catalogs are examples of the kinds of things folklorists study. All include detailed essays on regional traditions, some of which are similar to those in Nevada.

Cannon, Hal, ed. *Utah Folk Art: A Catalog of Material Culture*. Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1980.

Siporin, Steve, ed. *"We came to where we were supposed to be": Folk Art of Idaho*. Boise: Idaho Commission on the Arts, 1984.

Jones, Suzi, ed. *Webfoots and Bunchgrassers: Folk Art of the Oregon Country*. Salem: Oregon Arts Commission, 1980.

EDUCATION

Belanus, Betty J., et al. "Folklore in the Classroom." Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1985.
Workbook developed for Indiana school teachers; includes definitions and essays on aspects of folklife, lesson plans, activities, resources. Lots of useful suggestions and background. Available for $5.00 from Indiana Historical Bureau, 140 North Senate, Indianapolis, IN 46204.

The Foxfire Fund, Inc., Rabun Gap, GA 30568. The Foxfire organization (see publications under Wigginton, below) has a teacher outreach program, publishes a newsletter, and helps organize regional networks of teachers using the Foxfire approach to education. This is an excellent resource and a great way to get kids involved in their communities; folklore is just one aspect of what Foxfire does. Write for more information.

MacDowell, Marsha, ed. *Folk Arts in Education: A Resource Handbook*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, 1987.
A compendium of essays, bibliographies, and sample curriculum materials from folk arts in education projects around the country. Lots of ideas and practical examples, as well as the rationale behind such programs.

Simons, Elizabeth Radin. *Student Worlds, Student Words: Teaching Writing Through Folklore*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, 1990.
An excellent guide to teaching folklore and using it in student writing; written for high school age students, but adaptable to younger grades. Highly recommended.

FOLKLORE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Silnutzer, Randi and Beth Gildin Watrous, eds. *Drawing from the Well: Oral History and Folk Arts in the Classroom and Community.* Greenfield, MA: Pioneer Valley Folklore Society, 1990.
Descriptions, examples and lesson plans from several folklife and oral history projects in Massachusetts.

Wigginton, Eliot, ed. *The Foxfire Book.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972.
Followed by *Foxfire 2, 3, 4,* etc. up to about nine or so books by now.
Articles originally written by high school students in northern Georgia for a student-produced magazine, based on interviews with local residents. Topics include log cabin building, quilting, traditional foodways, folk medicine, crafts, ghost stories, music, etc. Excellent example of what kids can do with the local culture around them.

Wigginton, Eliot. *Sometimes a Shining Moment: The Foxfire Experience.* Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1986.
Part I is a review of the history of the Foxfire program and how it grew out of Wigginton's experience teaching high school English in rural Georgia. Part II presents general theories and lessons on teaching, gleaned from the Foxfire experience. Part III an outline for a twelve-week English course using the Foxfire model. The book is both inspirational and practical, written in an informal, conversational style.

Audio-Visual Materials

Most of the videotapes are available in VHS format on loan from the Nevada Humanities Committee Resource Center, 1101 N. Virginia St., P.O. Box 8029, Reno, NV 89507; 784-6587.

"Home Means Nevada." Audio cassette of 13 short radio shows on various aspects of Nevada folklore. Includes music, gambling lore, cowboy poetry, Shoshone cradleboards, Paiute songs, rawhide braiding, boot making and prospecting. Available for $7.00 from Folk Arts Program, Nevada State Council on the Arts, 329 Flint Street, Reno, NV 89440. Many school and local libraries already have a copy of the tape.

"Favorite Cowboy Recitations." Audio cassette of classic and newer traditional cowboy poems. Several reciters from eastern Nevada are included. Available from Cowboy Poetry Gathering, P.O. Box 888, Elko, NV 89801. Numerous other tapes and books of cowboy poetry are available from the Gathering; write for a complete catalog.

"Eighteen Mile: A Day in the Life of a Ranch Family." Twenty-minute slide show, available on video, about life on an Elko County ranch. For more information, write or call the Folk Arts Program, Nevada State Council on the Arts, 329 Flint Street, Reno, NV 89501; (702) 789-0225. Also available from the Humanities Resource Center.

"Cowboy Poets." An hour-long film featuring three cowboy poets at home, working, and reciting and discussing their poetry. Nevada's Waddie Mitchell appears first, followed by Slim Kite of Arizona and Wally McRae of Montana.

"Lige: Portrait of a Rawhide Braider." A 30-minute film, also available in VHS format, about Lige Langston, a cowboy and rawhide braider from the northern Nevada-California border area.

"The Highly Exalted." Hour long film/video about a northern Nevada ranch, and the buckaroos who travel with a wagon on fall roundup. Suitable for high school and adult audiences.

"The Stone Carvers." An entertaining and fascinating half-hour documentary film/video about immigrant Italian stonecarvers who work on the Washington Cathedral. The men talk about learning to carve through apprenticeships in Italy, and the little-known skills of their art. The film won an Academy Award in 1985 for Best Short Documentary.

"Ranch Album." An hour long documentary video about working cowboys on a large Arizona ranch, showing the yearly cycle of work and family life.